CROCKETT RESILIENCE ON DISPLAY AS NATIONAL REMEMBERANCE TAKES CENTER STAGE



Above: Rebecca Waddey is congratulated by teammates after curling in a left-footed corner kick for the goal that gave Crockett its eventual 2-1 victory. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

By the time you read this, it will be September 11, 2026 – the 25th anniversary of one of the most unspeakable tragedies in United States history, when terrorist-hijacked planes were intentionally crashed into New York City's Twin Towers and the Pentagon in Washington, D. C. Another plane was prevented from its target by the heroic actions of its passengers, who rushed the terrorists and sacrificed their own lives to take the plane down in a Pennsylvania field.

Almost 3,000 people lost their lives that day. Only God knows how many more were saved by the quick actions of first responders in the affected areas.

For the days that followed, the United States were just that: united. This nation came together in a magnificent outpouring of compassion, aid, and resolve that showed the rest of the world what can be accomplished when its citizens have a common goal: the common good.

Since then – because of the resilience that has traditionally been an American trademark – the USA has survived global wars, financial crises, worldwide pandemics, governmental and religious scandals, and a parade of bloviating politicians capable of making anybody's skin crawl – unless, of course, they're on your "side." We've survived because enough of us haven't yet given up on the idea that we're a better people than the recent track record has showed.

In the week following the 2001 attack, "Never Forget" became the catchphrase of the day. But two years later, Savannah's Darryl Worley became the USA's top country music celebrity when he wrote "Have You Forgotten?", because divisions were beginning to arise and partisan politics and the insistence on individual rights were getting more attention than the bonds and values that have traditionally defined most American households and communities.

Worley followed up in 2023 with "Have We Forgotten?", because things were getting even worse.
As horrible as the events of September 11, 2001 were, we still saw the best of what this country can be.

Twenty-five years later, is there still a chance we can rediscover the respect, civility, and yes – even the grace – with which we treated each other back then? Can we still find common goals? Can we disagree without becoming disagreeable? Let's hope these questions can still be answered with a resounding "yes."

When 9/11 shook us to our core in 2001, the world of sports helped tremendously in bringing the country back to "normalcy." Mike Piazza's winning home run in the New York Mets' first game back at Shea Stadium was a major contributor to the healing process in that city. When President George W. Bush took the mound in Yankee Stadium before Game 3 of the World Series, gave a "thumbs-up" to the sellout crowd, and then delivered a perfect-strike first pitch, the world saw that we believed then that everything was going to be all right.

Twenty-five years later, a couple of much smaller-scale Crockett County sports events from Thursday night showed that our young people are still displaying some of the traits we'd like to hang onto for a while.

HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER: Rebecca Waddey is a CCHS senior who is a model of perseverance and work ethic. The August and early September heat index has severely limited the Lady Cavaliers' practice schedule. Add in the complexity of a new coach (Alex Taylor) and a different system of play, and an adjustment period would be entirely understandable.

Waddey, to her credit, never cares what the heat index says. If the team can't practice together, so be it – but she can, and does, frequently by herself, wherever and whenever possible. That desire to excel has produced a player who can do things that many high school girls cannot – such as kicking equally well with either foot.

It was that special ability that paid off for Crockett Thursday in a district matchup with Dyer County at Cavalier Stadium, when Waddey – delivering a corner kick from the right side of the field – decided to do so with her left foot, so that the ball would be curling directly toward the Lady Choctaw goal. If the ball is moving toward the netting, it gives her teammates a much better chance of heading or deflecting the ball into the goal.

But Waddey has developed the skill known in soccer circles as "bend it like Beckham," a phrase describing English soccer star David Beckham's uncanny ability to spin the ball with such force that it curls ("bends") much more sharply than usual. Thursday – on this corner kick – Waddey curled the ball from the corner all the way into the net herself, providing the decisive goal in the Lady Cavaliers' 2-1 victory.

Crockett had taken a 1-0 lead in the contest when sophomore Ruth Gourley made a rush from the right side and beat the Dyer County goalkeeper to the ball just before the two collided, directing it toward the left side of the goal. A hustling Caroline Scruggs got to it just before it went out of bounds, punching it into the net for the score at the 19:46 mark.

After the visiting Lady Choctaws evened the count with a successful direct kick at 6:42, Waddey curled in her difficult shot in the fading minutes of the opening half (at 3:55), and Crockett goalkeeper Hannah Wede and the Lady Cav defense made the 2-1 score hold up throughout the entire second half.

HIGH SCHOOL CROSS-COUNTRY: With the vast majority of her girls team involved in the soccer duel, Coach Julie Nass concentrated on her boys unit in the USJ Invitational in Jackson – and her crew responded with the first Top 3 finish as a team since the 2022 season.

Crockett's boys finished tied for second place in the team standings with McKenzie, but were awarded second because the Cavs' sixth man – Mase Utley – came in well ahead of McKenzie's sixth man.

"We hammer the kids every day that they all matter, not just the top five," said Nass. "They all have to work hard because you never know when you might be the tiebreaker. It paid off today for Mase, who is the only runner to drop his time at every race so far. He was very excited."

Two Crockett runners medaled. Jose Aguirre was 12th and Uriel Diaz was 18th. Hutsen Stephens was 36th, Nathan Bailey 39th, Jose Diaz – bouncing back from an injury – was 49th, and Utley – giving the Cavs the tiebreaker edge – was 65th. Both Diazes, Utley, and Javier Aguirre all posted personal-best times in the race.

"To finish second with 15 complete boys teams here was fantastic for us," Nass said. "I think they are starting to believe they can do this goal we set for them of returning to State as a team."

On the girls side, junior Alivia Hale placed 10th in 23:48.72 to continue her streak of medaling in events – then promptly hit the road back to Alamo to play the second half of the soccer game. Crockett's only other runner was Isabella Aguirre, but she set her own personal record with a 33:50.06 time on her way to 47th place.

USJ Invitational (5K – 3.11 Miles)

Final Boys Team Scores: (1) Union City 58; (2) Crockett County 135; (3) McKenzie 135; (4) Lexington 139; (5) Westview 152; (6) West Tennessee Home Education Association 154; (7) Huntingdon 175; (8) Augustine 181; (9) Madison Academic 187; (10) TCA 229; (11) Henry County 244; (12) Hardin County 272; (13) Milan 327; (14) JCM 365; (15) Scotts Hill 376. Other Schools with Less Than Full Teams: Greenfield, USJ, Gibson County, McNairy Central, Dyer County, Haywood, WCHS, Liberty Tech, and Jackson South Side.

Boys Top 20 Individuals: (1) Deegan Arant, Greenfield 16:26.42; (2) Woodrow McKinnis, UC 17:37.09; (3) Liam Johnson, Aug 17:47.12; (4) Miloh Turner, UC 17:52.55; (5) Alister Wallace, McKenzie 18:23.19; (6) Hollis Bates, Henry Co 18:29.25; (7) Madix Turner, UC 18:41.91; (8) Jackson Woodrough, Westview 19:01.41; (9) Cal Fawcett, McK 19:06.74; (10) Brody Fields, UC 19:07.68; (11) Jason McNair Jr, USJ 19:14.55; (12) Jose Aguirre, Crockett Co 19:19.43; (13) Jonas Craig, Madison 19:22.66; (14) Cayden Mobley, Westview 19:27.15; (15) Derek Hodge, Hunt 19:33.64; (16) Walker Blair, Mad 19:37.77; (17) Jacob Pace, Lex 19:40.74; (18) Uriel Diaz, Crockett Co 19:40.76; (19) Malachi Roberts, Mad 19:42.79; (20) Ashton Wilson, WTHEA 19:48.72. Other Crockett Finishers: (36) Hutsen Stephens 20:57.91; (39) Nathan Bailey 21:11.13; (49) Jose Diaz 21:53.39; (65) Mase Utley 23:13.94; (76) Javier Aguirre 23:45.05. Total Runners: 125.

Final Girls Team Scores: (1) McKenzie 20; (2) Lexington 39. Other Schools with Less Than Full Teams: Westview, USJ, Henry County, Crockett County, Hardin County, WTHEA, Gibson County, Dyer County, TCA, Augustine, Huntingdon, Madison Academic, Milan, McNairy Central, Jackson South Side, Haywood, JCM, and Union City.

Girls Top 15 Individuals: (1) Alaina Uselton, Westview 19:18.22; (2) Abigail Wallace, McKenzie 20:21.71; (3) Autumn Haywood, McK 21:17.18; (4) Ainsley Phillips, Westview 21:58.51; (5) Hadley Haltom, USJ 22:21.37; (6) Marlee Jo Shell, Henry 23:14.36; (7) Eva Lewis, Lex 23:25.68; (8) Addyson Kirkland, USJ 23:27.12; (9) Bella Sass, McK 23:47.54; (10) Alivia Hale, Crockett Co 23:48.72; (11) Millie Brigham, McK 23:55.90; (12) Allisson Catalan, Hardin 24:02.77; (13) Julia Campbell, WTHEA 24:57.29; (14) Adley Thompson, GC 25:40.39; (15) Bailey Haliburton, Dyer Co 25:52.87. Other Crockett Finishers: (47) Isabella Aguirre 33:50.06. Total Runners: 62.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOFTBALL: Crockett's recent skid hit four straight defeats when South Gibson County blanked the Lady Cavs 6-0 Thursday. CCMS managed just one hit – a double by Brenley Hazlewood – and committed five errors in falling to 5-6 for the season

Below: Crockett's Ruth Gourley watches her assist pass trickle toward the goal area after a collision with Dyer County's defense... (Photo by Ron Barry)





Left: ... and Caroline Scruggs is all smiles after punching Gourley's pass into the corner of the net before it could get out of bounds. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Below: Hannah Wede made several key saves in goal for the Lady Cavaliers. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Right: Ruth Gourley and the Lady Choctaw goalkeeper had a similar play later in the half, but this one didn't go as well for the hosts. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Chloe Campbell's speed in the defensive backfield paid off on several plays as Crockett shut Dyer County out completely in the second half. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Above: Braniya Green saw extensive time in the defensive backfield and helped the Lady Cavs limit Dyer County to a single goal. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Right: Avery Thornton chases down a ball from the right side to try to get off a quick shot against Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)





Above: Olivia Barger tries to head this pass toward an open teammate in second-half play Thursday. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Below: Catherine Scruggs tries to fend off a Lady Choctaw player in an effort to get the ball moving toward a late goal opportunity. (Photo by Robin Waddey)



Left: At the end of the day, Crockett's chances are always improved by the determined presence of Rebecca Waddey, whose work ethic continues to set the standard for the Lady Cavs. (Photo by Robin Waddey)

Below: The second-place finish by the Crockett cross-country team Thursday at USJ was the first Top 3 placement by the boys since 2022. (Photo by Julie Nass)







Left: Jose Aguirre was again the top medalist for Crockett in the USJ race. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Right: Jose Diaz bounced back from an injury in his previous race to give the Cavs a key push in the team standings. (Photo by Ron Barry)







Right: Mase Utley -- Crockett's only runner who has reduced his time in every race this season -- broke the second-place tie for the Cavs by finishing well ahead of McKenzie's sixth man. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: Uriel Diaz placed 18th for Crockett to earn a medal at USJ. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Left: Medaling in the girls race was dependable Alivia Hale -- who then pulled double duty and hustled back to Alamo to play in the second half of the soccer game against Dyer County. (Photo by Ron Barry)